1:Heckewelder M-5 (ca. 1800)1819
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On every occasion, and in every situation through life, age takes the lead among the Indians. Even little boys, when going on parties of pleasure, were it only to catch butterflies, strictly adhere to this rule, and submit to the direction of the oldest in their company, who is their chief, leader and spokesman; if they are accosted on the way by any person, and asked whither they are going, or any other question, no one will presume to answer but their *speaker*. The same rule is observed when they are grown up, and in no case whatever will one of a party, club or meeting, attempt to assume authority over the leader, or even to set him right if he should mistake the road or take a wrong course; much less will any one contradict what he says, unless his opinion should be particularly asked, in which case, and no other, he will give his advice, but with great modesty and diffidence.

And yet there have been travellers who have ventured to assert that old people among the Indians are not only neglected and suffered to perish for want, but that they are even, when no longer able to take care of themselves, *put out of the way of all trouble*. I am free to declare, that among all the Indian nations that I have become acquainted with, if any one should kill an old man or woman for no other cause than that of having become useless or burdensome to society, it would be considered as an unpardonable crime, the general indignation would be excited, and the murderer instantly put to death. I cannot conceive any act that would produce such an universal horror and detestation, such is the veneration which is every where felt for old age.

Indeed, I have had sufficient reason to be convinced that this principle, excellent as it is in itself, is even carried too far by the Indians, and that not a little inconvenience is occasioned by it. A few instances will make this better understood than any explanations that I could give.

In the year 1765, the great body of Christian Indians,

[erratum. See vol. 116, p. 348. - Am. Ed.]